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**U.S. ANNOUNCES SETTLEMENT WITH GRAND RAPIDS LANDLORDS –
67 HOUSING UNITS TO BECOME LEAD SAFE**

Agreement signals increasing federal and local coordination in protecting children

GRAND RAPIDS, MI – The U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Western District of Michigan, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) today announced a settlement with two landlords for failing to inform tenants that their homes may contain potentially dangerous lead. The Grand Rapids owners have agreed to pay a \$6,000 fine and to render their residential housing lead safe, at an estimated cost of nearly \$350,000.

According to the Federal Government, Jose and Guillermina Sierra violated the federal Residential Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act (Residential Lead Act) and implementing regulations (Lead Disclosure Rule) by failing to inform tenants that their homes may contain potentially dangerous levels of lead. Kent County health officials identified three addresses where children had been lead poisoned while they lived in homes owned or managed by the Sierras.

As a result of the settlement, the Sierras tested all of their properties for lead-based paint and have agreed to perform lead-based paint hazard reduction work, including window replacement, abatement of all friction and impact surfaces, stabilization of all other non-friction and non-impact surfaces, and additional interim control work in all residential units they own and manage within a period of six years (see attached list). Work will be completed within six months on any property in which a child under six or pregnant woman resides.

“Protecting our children from dangerous lead and other home health hazards is crucial,” said HUD Deputy Secretary Ron Sims. “Together, the federal government and the parties in this case reached a fair settlement that advances the fight for the health and safety of our children and our homes.”

“By bringing these enforcement actions, EPA is restating that protecting our children’s health from lead-based paint exposure is one of our highest priorities,” said Bharat Mathur, acting region 5 administrator. “To this end, we will work with our partners to vigorously pursue compliance with these rules.”

“This resolution promotes the important goal of reducing lead exposure, especially among young children in homes in Grand Rapids,” stated Donald A. Davis, United States Attorney for the Western District of Michigan. “The U.S. Attorney’s Office, together with our Agency partners, will continue to pursue investigations and cases involving violations of the Residential Lead Act.”

The settlement announced today represents the first joint Lead Disclosure Rule enforcement action in Grand Rapids, Michigan and was the result of intensive coordination among local health officials and federal investigators. HUD, EPA and the Department of Justice are continuing similar enforcement efforts around the nation, but so far have taken enforcement actions in which landlords have agreed to conduct lead-based paint hazard reduction in more than 182,124 apartments and pay \$1,274,015 in civil penalties. In addition, a total of \$703,750 has been paid directly to community-based projects to reduce lead poisoning, and, in settling these cases, landlords have committed to expend more than an estimated \$30 million to address lead-based paint hazards in the affected units.

Background

The Residential Lead Act is one of the primary federal enforcement tools to prevent lead poisoning in young children. The Lead Disclosure Rule requires home sellers and landlords of housing built before 1978 to disclose to purchasers and tenants knowledge of lead-based paint or lead-based paint hazards using a disclosure form, signed by both parties, attached to the sales contract or lease containing the required lead warning statement, provide any available records or reports, and provide an EPA-approved “Protect Your Family From Lead in Your Home” pamphlet. Sellers must also provide purchasers with an opportunity to conduct a lead-based paint inspection and/or risk assessment at the purchaser’s expense. Acceptable lead disclosure forms can be found at www.hud.gov/offices/lead/disclosure and www.epa.gov/lead/pubs/leadbase.htm.

Health Effects of Lead-Based Paint:

Lead exposure causes reduced IQ, learning disabilities, developmental delays, reduced height, impaired hearing, and a host of other health problems in young children. Many of these effects are thought to be irreversible. In later years, lead-poisoned children are much more likely to drop out of school, become juvenile delinquents and engage in criminal and other anti-social behavior. As reported in the New England Journal of Medicine, researchers found that even at low levels, lead exposure in children can significantly impact IQ and even delay puberty in young girls.

At higher levels, lead can damage a child's kidneys and central nervous system and cause anemia, coma, convulsions and even death. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 310,000 of the nation’s 20 million children under the age of six have blood lead levels high enough to impair their ability to think, concentrate and learn.

Eliminating lead-based paint hazards in older low-income housing is essential if childhood lead poisoning is to be eradicated. According to CDC estimates, the percentage of children with elevated blood lead levels has been cut in half since the early 1990's, although the

prevalence of childhood lead poisoning in low-income, older housing without federal assistance remains high. HUD estimates that the number of houses with lead paint has declined from 64 million in 1990 to 38 million in 2000. About 24 million homes still have significant lead-based paint hazards.

Properties subject to this settlement agreement include:

	Address	# of Units
1.	16 Griggs	1
2.	19 Elm	2
3.	608 Liberty	1
4.	1055 Madison	2
5.	1152 Madison	2
6.	437 Hall	2
7.	24 Burton	2
8.	29 Burton	2
9.	39 Burton	3
10.	43 Burton	2
11.	44 Burton	3
12.	52 Burton	4
13.	401 Burton	2
14.	1748 Division	2
15.	1814 Division	2
16.	1818 Division	1
17.	1822 Division	2
18.	1826 Division	1
19.	1854 Division	2
20.	1912 Division	6
21.	1916 Division	2
22.	1822 Horton	2
23.	1841 Horton	2
24.	1905 Horton	2
25.	1960 Horton	2
26.	2032 Horton	2
27.	45 Sutton	2
28.	48 Sutton	2
29.	141 Griggs	2
30.	525 Shamrock	2
31.	415 Laurel	2
32.	222 Montgomery	1
	Total Units	67